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This year's Scremfest said to be the scariest of the past five years

By **ROBIN DOWNTON-POIRIER**
Special to The Champion

Ghouls, ghosts, corpses and witches will be plentiful at the end of October but none as creepy, scary and grotesque as those found at the fifth annual Scremfest presented by After Dark Productions and being held at White Rock Ostrich Farm.

Spine-chilling music, blood-curdling special effects, and anything your imagination can conjure up will fill the seven-room haunted house at White Rock Ostrich Farm on Fourth Line in Rockwood over weekends throughout October.

A few new scares have been added to this year's event, and they're said to make Scremfest 2004 the best to date.

"We started working on this year's event around the end of May," said one of After Dark Productions' owners, John Platt. "We have been working every weekend and usually four to five hours a couple of days a week. There is so much work that goes into making this what it is."

Mr. Platt started the haunted house many years ago at his Mississauga home to entertain the neighborhood children.

When the children grew up, the haunted house creating was taken over by his nephew, Gordon Goss, who had bigger plans for the event. Mr. Goss and his friend, Richard Gehres, created After Dark Productions and made the haunted house into a business. A more suitable location was found at White Rock Ostrich Farm, owned by Don and Debra Simmons, and Scremfest has grown in popularity ever since.

After Dark Productions now has four partners that create this nightmare for the public to enjoy. Mr. Platt is a freelance artist and is responsible for planning and building many of the pieces in the house.



Scremfest 2004 is guaranteed to scare.

Mr. Gehres is an electrician so lighting things up is his job. Mr. Goss and Paul Clinton are jacks-of-all-trades and do a bit of everything to make the show as scary and creepy as can be. It takes a minimum of 14 people, some in costume and some behind-the-scenes, to operate the haunted house and the surrounding graveyard. Mr. Platt said that they hire mainly local young talent to fill the needed roles and the teenagers love to get out and give visitors a good scare.

"There are seven interior rooms with names such as the Not So Living Room, the Autopsy Room, the Nursery and the Black Maze," said Mr. Platt. "There is also a graveyard and various outside monsters that wander around. There will be a concession stand and a campfire that visitors can use to keep warm."

New attractions this year include a jewellery vendor that sells Gothic-style baubles as well as face painting and a Henna tattoo artist. There will also be a Victorian-style sideshow called 'Professor Orbax's Museum of Natural and Unnatural Curiosities'.

"Everyone will be in period costumes for this show," said Mr. Platt. "There are both mythical and real artifacts such as the World's Smallest Unicorn and Alligator Boy."

Each year, attendance to Scremfest grows as more people learn about it. Many return year after year for their annual terror fix.

Because After Dark Productions employs strobe lights and liquid fog in their special effects, the show isn't recommended for those suffering from epilepsy. As well, it isn't recommended for people with heart conditions, expectant mothers, or children under the age of 8. Parental discretion is strongly advised.

"I have always been interested in sci-fi, fantasy, and horror," said Mr. Platt. "This is good, harmless fun and we really enjoy scaring people. Everyone enjoys a good fright and a good laugh and we definitely provide it for them."

Scremfest 2004 opened Saturday and continues rain or shine October 15, 16, 22, 23, 29, and 30 from 7 to 10 p.m. Admission costs \$8 for adults 12 years old and over and \$6 for children 8 to 11 years old.

For more information, visit the Scremfest Web site at www.scremfest.info or call (905) 820-3274.

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 "I see and I remember"
 "I do and I understand"

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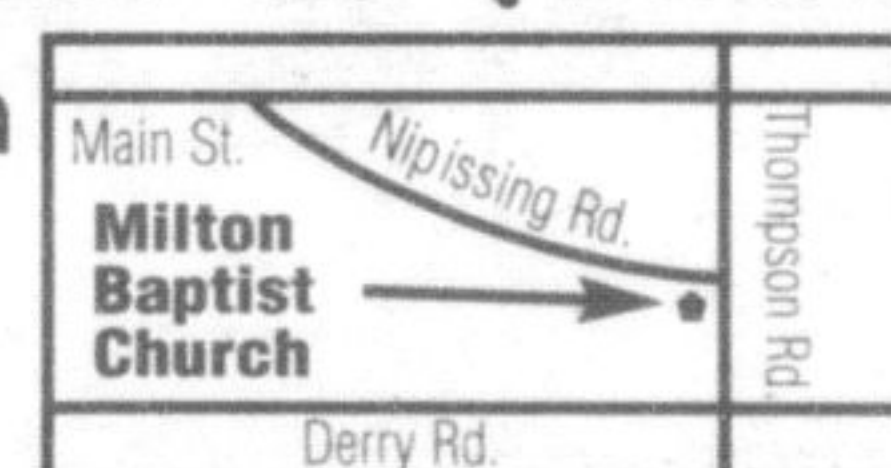
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